

1406.0.55.003 - User Manual: Responsible Use of ABS CURFs, Sep 2009

Latest ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 22/02/2012 Reissue



Introduction

Includes: Overview of why confidentiality is important



ABS Terms and Conditions of CURF access

Includes: CURF undertaking and access



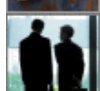
Consequences of failing to comply with the undertaking

Includes: Outlines the actions that could be taken by ABS



Secure storage of ABS CURF Microdata

Includes: How to store microdata



Responsible Officer: Responsibilities

Includes: Who can be a Responsible Officer



Contact Officer: Roles and Responsibilities

Includes: Why a Contact Officer is necessary



CURF User: Responsibilities

Includes: What you need to know

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INTRODUCTION

Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) are files of responses to ABS surveys or censuses that have had specific identifying information about persons and organisations confidentialised. CURFs contain the most detailed statistical information available from the ABS, and are of most use to researchers and analysts who wish to run their own statistical queries on the data.

The Census and Statistics Act includes a legislative guarantee to respondents that their confidentiality will be protected. This is fundamental to the trust the Australian public has in the ABS, and that trust is in turn fundamental to the excellent quality of ABS information. Without that trust, survey respondents may be less forthcoming or truthful in answering our questionnaires. For more information, see 'Avoiding inadvertent disclosure' and 'Microdata' on our web page [How the ABS keeps your information confidential](#).

These protections are also to ensure respondent confidentiality is maintained and in response to the legislative requirement for the Australian Statistician to release microdata '**... in a manner that is not likely to enable the identification of a particular person or organisation to which it relates**', the ABS:

- removes all directly identifying information such as names and addresses, etc.
- ensures data items likely to identify respondents are released in broad categories only - for example, while a particular survey questionnaire may record the respondents' home or business address, microdata may be released at the state or territory level
- checks for records with uncommon combinations of responses, and may alter them slightly to ensure individuals or organisations cannot be identified.

In addition, we place restrictions on how you may use the microdata. These restrictions are set out in the CURF Undertaking signed by each organisation's Responsible Officer. Each individual must agree to the ABS Terms and Conditions of CURF Access when submitting an application.

These restrictions, and your responsibilities toward them, are discussed in detail in this manual. In addition to the use you make of the microdata, they also relate to your secure management of CURF access.

Careful reading of this Manual is a prerequisite for access to ABS CURF microdata.

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ABS TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF CURF ACCESS

Before access to CURFs can be granted by the ABS, a Responsible Officer in an Organisation must submit a signed CURF Undertaking.

- The Undertaking is a requirement under Clause 7 of the Statistics Determination (1983) under the Census and Statistics Act (1905).
- Information about who can sign the Undertaking can be found in the Responsible Officer section.

Clause 7 requires that the Responsible Officer to agree that CURF users in the organisation will:

- not attempt to identify persons or organisations to which the information relates
- use the information only for statistical purposes
- not provide microdata to anyone inside or outside the organisation without the written permission of the ABS, and
- not attempt to match the information with any other list of persons or organisations

Individual CURF users are not required to sign an Undertaking. Rather, they are bound by the Undertaking signed by their organisation's Responsible Officer. Each person who wishes to use a CURF must apply to the ABS for approval. Apply for access using MiCRO the ABS' online microdata application and management system.

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CONSEQUENCES OF FAILING TO COMPLY WITH CURF UNDERTAKING

Where a person is found to have breached the CURF Undertaking the ABS may:

- immediately suspend their access to all CURFs, disable their Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL) access and require that they surrender all microdata in their possession to their organisation's Contact Officer or to the ABS, pending investigation of the breach, and
- inform the organisation's Contact and Responsible Officers that an investigation is underway.

Following the investigation and depending on the nature of the breach the ABS may require the development and implementation of strategies to:

- restrict or overcome the consequences of the breach, and
- ensure no repetition of the breach.

Depending on the success of these strategies and the severity of the breach, the ABS may:

- reactivate the suspended access, or
- extend suspension temporarily or permanently, or
- where justified, suspend or terminate access for the organisation as a whole.

Where justified by the nature of the breach, the ABS may also invoke Subsection 19 (3) of the Census and Statistics Act 1905 which provides that a person who fails to comply with an undertaking given by that person in respect of a CURF is guilty of an indictable offence, punishable on conviction by a fine of 120 penalty units (\$20,400) or imprisonment for two years, or both.

While ABS must treat breaches of the Undertaking very seriously we would much rather help users and their organisations avoid the possibility of a breach. If at any time, you are unsure about your organisation's compliance with the CURF Undertaking please contact microdata.access@abs.gov.au or call 02 6252 7714.

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SECURE STORAGE OF ABS CURF MICRODATA

ABS CURF microdata must be stored in a manner that ensures unauthorised access does not occur.

The following are guidelines for storing the microdata and results of your analyses:

- any computer on which ABS microdata is stored must be kept in a locked room and/or have password protection to prevent access by others
- any information or results stored on a computer network must be kept in a directory with suitably restricted access
- any printouts or any physical medium containing microdata (such as a CD-ROM provided by the ABS) must be kept in a locked room or secured in a locked cabinet when the researcher is not present, and
- you must keep track of datasets and printouts that reveal microdata, so that they can be destroyed when they are no longer needed

Your organisation must also provide for a secure way to delete computer files so that they cannot be recovered by an unauthorised person.

Aggregate outputs of your research may be shared.

Examples of data that do not reveal microdata are:

- tabulations containing cells with 3 or more contributing sample units, and
- details of fitted models, such as regression parameters

Examples of data that must be kept secure:

- prints of unit records
- tabulations containing less than 3 contributing sample unit records, and
- details of unusual unit records that require special treatment in modelling

For more information on tabulations or 'keep secure' please refer to User Restrictions chapter of the User Manual: ABS Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL) (cat. no. 1406.0.55.002).

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RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: RESPONSIBILITIES

WHY ABS REQUIRES A RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

ABS legislation requires that before CURF access can be granted by ABS, a Responsible Officer of an organisation must submit an Undertaking.

The Responsible Officer is that person legally accountable for their organisations use of CURFs.

Who can be an Responsible Officer:

- **for universities:** a Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor or University Registrar
- **for government departments:** a Secretary of Department, Head of Agency or equivalent, as agreed with the ABS
- **for private sector organisations:** a person who has the same legal responsibility for the actions of the entity as a Departmental Secretary does for a Department. This will usually be someone with the status of CEO, Company Secretary or Managing Director

RESPONSIBILITIES

By signing the CURF Undertaking, the Responsible Officer agrees that CURF users in the organisation will:

- not attempt to identify persons or organisations to which the information relates
- use the information only for statistical purposes
- not provide microdata to anyone inside or outside the organisation without the written permission of the ABS, and
- not attempt to match the information with any other list of persons or organisations

ABS asks that the Responsible Officer assign a Contact Officer to assist in ensuring appropriate management and use of CURF Microdata within your organisation, and to liaise with the ABS on all Microdata related matters.

Further information relevant to your responsibilities can be found in the Responsible Officer - Tool Kit, Microdata Entry Page or by contacting the ABS via email.

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CONTACT OFFICER: ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE

Contact Officers are appointed by their Responsible Officer to ensure appropriate management and use of CURF Microdata within their organisation and to liaise with the ABS on all Microdata related matters.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide the primary point of contact with ABS on microdata access matters
- Coordinate the completion of the CURF Undertaking by the Responsible Officer
- Endorse applicants as members of the organisation
- Endorse applications for access to microdata products
- Authorise payment for organisational access to microdata
- Coordinate ABS periodic audits of compliance with the CURF Undertaking
- Have access to administrative data on CURF use and users within their organisation.

Information on the Contact Officer's role in MiCRO can be found in the MiCRO guide for Contact Officers, click on the 'downloads' tab above to save the file.

Further information relevant to your responsibilities can be found in the Contact Officer - Tool Kit.

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CURF USER: RESPONSIBILITIES

RESPONSIBILITIES

Use of ABS CURFs requires Individual Users to adhere to responsibilities that are defined under Clause 7 of the Statistics Determination 1983 under the Census and Statistics Act 1905. These responsibilities are provided in the CURF Undertaking that is signed by a Responsible Officer of each organisation prior to CURFs being released.

As an approved Individual User, you agree to:

- use CURF Microdata only for the statistical purpose approved by the ABS
- not attempt to identify particular persons or organisations - in particular, not to match, with or without using identifiers, the microdata with any other list of persons or organisations
- read the User Manual: ABS Remote Access Data Laboratory (cat. no. 1406.0.55.002) before accessing the RADL
- adhere to all ABS directions and system constraints when using RADL
- surrender access to a CURF upon completion of the specific statistical purpose for which access was approved
- keep CURF Microdata secure and not disclose microdata to any other person or organisation, other than:
 - members of your organisation who have been approved by the ABS to have individual access to the CURF, or
 - where you are retained as a consultant by a 'third party' organisation for an approved statistical purpose, members of that third party organisation who have been approved by the ABS to have individual access to the CURF
- not attempt to access the microdata after:
 - the term of your authorisation expires
 - your authorisation is rescinded by the organisation which provided it, or
 - you cease to be a member of that organisation
- on leaving your organisation:
 - surrender all copies of CURFs on CD-ROM in your possession to your Contact Officer, and
 - destroy microdata stored on your secure server.

Publication of data and analysis of the CURF must cite the Australian Bureau of Statistics as the source of the data and include a prominently displayed notice that the results or views expressed are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the ABS. More information about citing CURFs in published output is available in the Guide to Citing ABS Sources.

The Microdata pages on the ABS website provide an opportunity for researchers to provide a link to their Published Research Using CURF Microdata. Please contact microdata.access@abs.gov.au to get your paper displayed.

Information on the CURF User role in MiCRO can be found in the MiCRO user guide click on the 'downloads' tab above, to save the file.

Further information relevant to your responsibilities can be found in the CURF User - Tool Kit.

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This manual lists and explains the specific responsibilities of CURF users, Responsible Officers and Contact Officers. It also offers guidelines on the secure management of CURF Microdata and briefly describes the consequences for individuals and organisations of any failure to meet their responsibilities. It does so in order to assist compliance with the ABS Terms and Conditions of CURF Access.

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22/02/2012 This user manual has been updated to include changes to the legislation and processes in applying and managing your microdata holdings.

This product was formally known as Technical Manual: Responsible Access to CURFs Training Manual.

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